

## 2HT508 Classics of Personal Devotion

Reformed Theological Seminary - Orlando

Fall Semester, 2008

Monday afternoons 3:00pm - 4:00pm

Instructor: Dr. Chuck DeGroat

Office Hours: As posted

Telephone for Chuck DeGroat: 407-461-1366

E-mail for Chuck DeGroat: cdegroat@rts.edu

### PURPOSE

A balanced seminary curriculum fosters Scriptural exegesis (normative), cultural exegesis (situational), and self exegesis (existential). This course is an introduction to the writings and practices of some of the deepest soul exegetes throughout church history. The purpose of this course is to invite the student in to an oft-neglected aspect of exegetical and hermeneutical work, and perhaps more deeply in to his/her soul and communion with God.

### OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students will:

1. Be able to show increased familiarity and readability in classical spiritual and devotional writings.
2. Be aware of both the benefits and pitfalls of classical devotional (and mystical) literature.
3. Be able to interact honestly about their own experiences of God in writing and dialogue.
4. Be more attuned to their spiritual need for rest, silence, solitude and the classical spiritual disciplines.
5. Have tools to practice the spiritual disciplines in ways that are wise and biblical.

## FORMAT

Teaching will include lecture and group discussion.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. François Fénelon *Let Go*
2. Foster, Richard. *Devotional Classics*
3. Henri Nouwen *With Open Hands*
4. *The Valley of Vision* (Puritan prayers)

## SUGGESTED AUTHORS & READINGS

- Some of the classics below are available free of charge at [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)

1. Anderson and Reese. *Spiritual Mentoring*
2. Anonymous. *The Way of the Pilgrim and The Cloud of Unknowing*
3. Assisi, Francis of
4. Augustine, St.
5. Avila, Theresa of *Interior Castle*
6. Baxter, Richard
7. Beeke, Joel *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*
8. Benner, David
9. Bennet, Arthur (ed). *The Valley of Vision* (a compilation of Puritan prayers)
10. Bingen, Hildegard of
11. Bonaventure. *The Soul's Journey into God*
12. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich
13. Buechner, Frederick
14. Bunyan, John
15. Burroughs, Jeremiah
16. Calvin, John. esp. *Letters & The Golden Booklet*.
17. Clairvaux, Bernard of
18. Climacus, J. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.
19. Collins, Kenneth. *Exploring Christian Spirituality*
20. Crabb, Larry. *Soul Talk*
21. deReuver, Arie. *Sweet Communion* (a great introduction to the Dutch Reformed spiritual writers and Dutch mysticism)
22. DeSales, Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life*
23. Edwards, Jonathon. *Religious Affections*.
24. Edwards, Dwight. *Soul Revolution*
25. Fenelon, Francis. *Let Go*
26. Flavel, John. *Keeping the Heart*
27. Foster, Richard
28. Fox, George

29. Guyon, Madame.
30. Herbert, George. *The Country Parson*
31. Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems and Prose*
32. Ignatius. *Spiritual Exercises*
33. Jones, Timothy. *Awake My Soul*
34. Kelly, Thomas R. *A Testament of Devotion*
35. a Kempis, Thomas. *The Imitation of Christ*
36. Kisly, Lorraine. *Ordinary Graces: Christian Teachings on the Interior Life*
37. Kurtz and Ketcham. *The Spirituality of Imperfection*
38. L'Engle, Madeline.
39. Lawrence, Brother. *The Practice of the Presence of God*
40. MacDonald, George. *Diary of an Old Soul*
41. Manning, Brennan
42. Marty, Martin. *The Cry of Absence*
43. May, Gerald. *Addiction and Grace, Dark Night of the Soul, etc*
44. McGrath, Alistair. *The Journey: A Pilgrim in the Lands of the Spirit and Christian Spirituality*
45. Merton, Thomas.
46. Muller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives*
47. Nouwen, Henri
48. Norwich, Julian. *Revelations of Divine Love*
49. Owen, John. *Communion with God*
50. Packer, J.I.
51. Pascal. *Pensees*
52. Payne, Leanne.
53. Peterson, Eugene.
54. Postema, Don. *Space for God* (a great Reformed resource from someone who studied under Nouwen)
55. Rutherford, Samuel. *Letters*
56. Shults, F. LeRon. *Transforming Spirituality*
57. Sienna, Catherine of
58. Spurgeon, Charles.
59. Tozer, A.W.
60. Vanier, Jean
61. Voetius, Gisbertus. *Spiritual Desertion* (Reformed work now translated)

62. Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Repentance*

63. Whitfield, George. *Journals*

64. Willard, Dallas.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **PRESENCE** - Come to class. Plan to engage and participate.
2. **READING** -
  - a. Please read *All of With Open Hands* and *Let Go*. These are short works.
  - b. Use *Valley of Vision* devotionally, and at your own pace. You are not required to read all of the prayers. They may inform your spiritual journaling, however.
  - c. Please read selections from *Devotional Classics* that are assigned the week prior.
3. **SPIRITUAL JOURNALING** - Keep a private spiritual journal which intentionally reflects upon your readings in this class and other classes this semester. This will NOT be graded by or seen by the professor. Please email a one-page response to the professor by the last day of the semester with the following: *How has this exercise deepened my intimacy with God and my understanding of myself this semester?*
4. **SPIRITUAL LETTERS** - Spiritual letters were written by Samuel Rutherford, John Calvin, George Whitfield, Francois Fenelon, Jack Miller, and many others throughout church history. Write two letters this semester to fellow students at seminary or someone from your church, leaning on what you're learning from the writers you're reading. One letter will be an encouragement. The other will be a challenge. (See Jack Miller's excellent letters in *The Heart of a Servant Leader* for example.) DO NOT send the letters until after I read them and provide feedback. Due: Wednesday before Thanksgiving Break

## GRADING SCALE

Listed below are the assignments that will determine your final course grade.

Reading - 20% - Please email me on the last day of semester with percentage read from *With Open Hands* and *Let Go*.

Journal - 30% - one-page reflection due by email last day of semester.

Letters - 30% - Due Wednesday before Thanksgiving Break

Class participation - 20%

A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75-77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70)

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

If you should miss a class, you are expected to contact another student regarding the information covered.